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The Greatest Confession of Them All

One of Marx's favorite maxims was "Doubt everything." His Communist followers have too long operated on the opposite theory. They have been trained to believe everything they are told, so long as it comes from Moscow and party higher-ups. The beginnings of such an attitude must already have been evident in Marx's lifetime, since Marx is reported once to have said with distaste that he was not a Marxist. A few readers who are Marxists in this un-Marxist sense wrote in angrily to protest the astringent observations in our issues of February 7 and February 21 on the subject of the charges against the Moscow doctors. We thought the charges "too hideous to be credible," urged that foreign observers be allowed at the trials and observed, "The Russian rulers have a way of erecting possibilities into actualities and then staging trials to 'prove' what they fear. Their trials are political morality plays which cynically assume an audience too unintelligent to be impressed by anything less than melodrama. It is not enough to prove that a man is mistaken; he must be displayed as a monster."

In this as in so many other matters a new and cleaner wind seems to be blowing through the Russian capital. Of all the confessions which have marked the Soviet regime's long series of "show trials" back to the 20's no confession is more startling, more unexpected and more worthy of belief than the confession by the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the doctors had been arrested on false charges and held up to the world as guilty on the basis of confessions extorted by "impermissible" means. The international implications are striking enough—these doctors were alleged to have poisoned Soviet leaders on orders of American "imperialism" directed through its "bourgeois Jewish nationalist" hirelings in the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Zionist movement. If the charges were false in the case of the doctors, six of them Jewish; might not similar charges in the Slansky and other trials have been equally false? There were indications of a wider revision in a Pravda editorial which said "careful verification" had established that similar means had been used to slander "an honest public leader, the people's artist of the U.S.S.R., Mikhoels. . . ." This was the Yiddish actor, Solomon Mikhoels, of whom nothing had been heard in some time.

Jewish readers in the Soviet Union must see in that a hope that the new government will put a damper on a campaign against "Zionists" which had led to the suppression of many Jewish cultural activities and pandered to anti-Semitic feeling. The general message at home, however, must be far more startling. The admission that the secret police had committed a deliberate wrong, that confessions had been wrung by "impermissible" means from innocent persons, must seem an almost revolutionary development to thoughtful citizens of the Soviet Union and the satellite countries where people are accustomed to regard the secret police as all-powerful. This is a development far outside the orbit of the paranoid speculations of Washington about the new Soviet "peace offensive." This is a domestic matter, which opens a door that can never completely be closed again. If the secret police used "impermissible" means in this case, what of others? Which means are "impermissible"? Just how were the confessions extorted? What steps can be taken to prevent such occurrences in the future? Most explosive of all is a question which must follow: what was wrong with Stalin's regime that such miscarriages of justice could occur under it? And how many unjustly accused or framed political prisoners may there be in the penal labor camps of the U.S.S.R.?

Russian policy has too long operated on the half-truth that the Soviet Union was ringed with enemies. The new regime if it continues on this path will discover that the Soviet Union is also ringed with friends. Even in "reactionary" circles in the West there is evident an almost wistful readiness to believe that perhaps peace may be achieved. There are other circles, friendly to socialism, with a great respect for the Russian people, which have been shamed and antagonized by much that has occurred since the Revolution. Amid the gigantic achievements obscured by the mists of hateful propaganda, there has also been an indifference to mass suffering and individual injustice, a sycophancy and an iron-clad conformity, that has disgraced the socialist ideal. The atmosphere bred at home by unlimited dictatorship has been reflected abroad in an unnecessary rudeness and crudeness in dealing with other nations. Part of the Soviet Union's troubles has been of its own creation, just as part of our difficulties in dealing with the U.S.S.R. have been of our own making. The world for nations as for men is often a mirror that reflects their own image, returning hate for hate, good will for good will.

There are forces in the world which do not want peace. There are forces which fear socialism and wish to destroy it even at the risk of self-destruction. These forces play their part now in every Western capital and seek to prevent peace from breaking out. But the new Soviet regime will also find that there is a large, a much larger, body of opinion in the West, which can be won for peace and co-existence and humane relationships if the effort is made. The signs of a change at home will do much to harness this potential for peace. Were the new Soviet regime to follow up its confession about the doctors with steps to make such frame-ups less likely in the future, it would awe the world. Russia needs habeas corpus, the right to counsel and the doctrine of overt act as the test of guilt if it is to dissipate the murk of conspiracy on which its secret police has grown great. Internal changes of this kind would go far to dissipate those fears on which the warmongers depend.

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ECONOMICS AND PEACE:

Does The Kremlin Want A Slump In America?

Should peace break out too suddenly the consequences may be disastrous. The world outside the Soviet bloc is in the position of a dope addict who dare not too abruptly be denied his abnormal stimulation. A slow levelling off of tension would have its advantages. It may seem cynical to say so but fortunately the relaxation of tension will be slow, if indeed it is not upset altogether by those who do not want peace.

The same commentators who were saying last year that the Soviets were trying to get us to spend ourselves into disaster now suggest that Moscow's idea may be to create an economic depression in the West, and so give the Communists a chance to "take over." These are the alternative cliches of those who find it safest to regard the world as a continuous conspiracy from the Kremlin.

Flanders of Vermont, an intelligent business man and an intelligent Senator, fell back on this variant of the bogeyman theory in pleading the need of plan for peace. "I think we may be certain," he told the Senate, "that our new and our old friends in Russia confidently expect us to go into a tailspin if we stop our high expenditures for war."

But it would be worth the while of the Soviet bloc to do the planning for us free of charge rather than see a serious slump here in the wake of peace. A depression serious enough to create the mere possibility of revolutionary situations in Japan, India or Western Europe would almost certainly bring American armed intervention on a scale far beyond that in Korea. Imagine the repercussions here of a Communist putsch in Italy or Japan. Imagine the shriver of apprehension which would run through American capitalism if it looked as if India might go the way of China.

All the crypto-Fascist forces nurtured by the loss of China to the Communists would be immensely strengthened. America would be frightened into something close to full mobilization. Repression would be intensified, and the prospect of using a new crusade against communism as a means of stimulating business would be irresistible. The drive toward World War III which the Russian and Chinese Communists are obviously trying to avoid would take on swifter momentum. Peace can only be preserved if a certain measure of economic stability can be achieved in the wake of any political settlement. The Soviet bloc, in its pursuit of peace, can no more afford a slump in America than can Western Europe.

But the chances for economic stability are not very good. This is the situation as it looks from Washington:

The new Administration seems to have but one consistent economic policy. This is to raise the level of interest rates—and at the same time loosen the restrictions on speculation. This makes sense from the standpoint of the banks. It raises the price of their chief commodity, which is credit, and it encourages more speculative activity on credit. The fall in goverment bonds, the steady rise in yields and interest rates, are the banker's payoff for a Republican victory.

Theoretically, such a policy is deflationary. By increasing the cost of credit, it puts a brake on business expansion and consumer buying. But there is a wide gap between theory and actuality in economics.

Is the new Administration deliberately following a deflationary policy? Is it trying for a "healthy readjustment" in price and wage levels? Such purposes would follow logically from its money policies. But there seem to be few if any informed observers here who think there is any such broader plan behind the events in the money market. The general opinion seems to be that the purpose is simply to raise interest rates and bank earnings.

Should progress be quickly made, toward a Korean settlement, however, the steady tightening of credit would have an additional effect on business activity.

One of the ways to counteract a lessening of military expenditures—and the swift fear of such reduction—would be by cheapening credit. This might encourage civilian expansion and borrowing by cities and states for public works. But this would run up against resistance from the banking crowd.

The easy first step for a Republican Administration would be to reduce taxes. Unfortunately there is little reason to believe from the experience of the early 30's that tax reduction will stimulate either consumer buying or capital investment against an adverse economic tide.

The Administration, for all its shortcomings, is considerably more enlightened than Congress. And in Congress the Senate is somewhat more forward looking than the House, which has prior hold on the purse-strings. This was dramatized last week when the Council of Economic Advisers died for lack of funds the day after the Communist about-face on the prisoner of war issue sent a premonitory chill through the stock and commodity markets. This agency was set up by the Employment Act of 1946 to help cope with just such situations. But the funds needed to continue the Council were blocked without debate by the House after an appropriation had been approved in the Senate.

The climate of opinion in Washington as regards "economic planning" is not what it was a few years ago. Senator Taft, who took the word "full" out of the Full Employment Act before voting for it in 1946, illustrates the change. He explained to the Senate recently, without wincing, that the purpose of the Council of Economic Advisers is to "plan economic policy, just as the National Security Council plans long range military and foreign policy." But the senior Senator from Ohio is an enlightened conservative and for the rank and file of his party economic planning is still synonymous with socialism. The Administration need only wage a militant fight for the Council—on the heels of its appointment of a Yalta apologist to the Embassy in Moscow—to make the average Republican Congressman feel that Eisenhower ran for office on the wrong ticket, and is boring from within the G.O.P.

In terms of mere arithmetic a truce in Korea, even a full settlement there and the withdrawal of American troops, would not be enough to cause much of a recession in the American economy. From an economic point of view, the Korean affair is distinctly a "police action," not a major war. But the U.S. is a very volatile country and an armistice may set off as sharp a wave of selling as the onset of the Korean war set off a wave of buying. This may have serious repercussions abroad, where the economic margins are thin and precarious. The most dangerous spot is Japan, which would have been in the most serious kind of difficulties without the business created for it by the war in Korea. A Japanese slump would adversely effect world markets in which the Japanese compete, especially the already depressed textile market.

The position of Britain, France and Germany is not much better. A slight slump here plus a reduction in foreign aid plus the possibility of a general relaxation of tension could have a disastrous effect in Western Europe and in the entire sterling area. The fact is that the crisis of West European capitalism has only been staved off by American aid and American aid has only been obtainable by playing on fear of Russia. An economy minded Congress, eager above all for tax cuts, might react swiftly to a diminution of tension. This Congress will be as quick to cut foreign aid as it will be slow to prime the pump of business with public works in the event of a slump, while the American bankers generally may be foolish enough to welcome the prospect of a little "healthy deflation."

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Time for A Change

Every year about this time the House Appropriations Committee releases the annual testimony of J. Edgar Hoover on the FBI budget. Each year he gives the committee the latest figure on the membership of the Communist party—an exact count, down to the last subversive digit, as if the comrades had been herded through a special turnstile by the FBI. The membership figures as he has given them during the last five years follow:

1949	54,174
1950	52,669
1951	43,217
1952	31,608
1953	24,796

As anyone can see by running his eye down the figures, the Communist party, according to Hoover, has lost more than 50 percent of its members in the last five years.

But while the number of Communists has been dwindling, the number of FBI men employed to watch them has been growing. The FBI budget has been rising at just about the same rate that Communist party membership has been falling. In the fiscal year ended June 30, 1948, the FBI budget was less than $30,000,000. For the fiscal year beginning next July 1 Hoover is asking $77,000,000. The number of Communists is less than half what it was five years ago but the FBI budget is more than double what it was then.

Not Doing So Well

This is not because the FBI is spending more time chasing bank robbers. Its main business is "internal security," i.e. acting as a political police. Some readers will recall that last year just about this time Attorney General McGranery fired Newbold Morris as special investigator of corruption in government, declaring that if he saw any corruption around he would "straighten it out" himself with the aid of the FBI.

Morris replied that the FBI was too busy to investigate corruption. He said Hoover "told me it was impossible for his department to do anything except the task before them of counter-espionage."

It would appear from Hoover's testimony this year that the FBI is not doing too well at that task. Hoover told the House committee "the enemy espionage rings are more intensively operated today than they have been at any previous time in the history of the country."

A statement of this kind, from any other official so long a part of the Roosevelt-Truman Administration, would provoke a storm in Congress, if not an investigation to determine whether Hoover himself might not be . . . well, you never can tell.

The number of Communists has been cut in half, the FBI budget has been doubled, the government has been turned turvy by one loyalty purge after another, yet Hoover says enemy spy rings are working here more intensively than ever before. Either the enemy must be devilishly clever or the FBI must be devilishly full of *dummkopfs.*

The question which rises is: if Hoover knows that enemy spy rings are working here so intensively, why doesn't he break them up? Either the director of the FBI is talking through his hat or—as the Republicans would say of any other holdover from the last Administration—it is time for a change.

Hat's Off

In this connection the *Weekly* takes its hat off this week to Dean Carl W. Ackerman of the Columbia University School of Journalism for declaring that he will no longer freely open his files to FBI and other investigators of student "loyalty."

Dean Ackerman thinks students should be free to talk "without fear that someone may make a record which may be investigated secretly, upon which he may be tried secretly, and also be convicted secretly, either by a governmental official or a prospective employer."

A whole generation of students is being brought up to believe what some of us like to think is the most un-American doctrine imaginable. They are being brought up to believe that it is best to keep one's mouth shut.

Un-Russian Activity

This business of keeping tabs on students and their "loyalty" is a good old Russian custom. Students were closely watched under the Czars and have been as closely watched for dangerous "deviations" under their Communist successors. Our professional anti-Communists are following the same pattern. The self-proclaimed defenders of Americanism are themselves spreading the most noxiously un-American ideas and people who should know better dutifully echo the kind of nonsense necessary for political respectability.

An example is the theory of "lawful limits" on free expression propounded last week by the stuffed-shirty Association of American Universities in its statement on the "rights and responsibilities" of university faculties. The statement regards the First Amendment much as Vishinsky in his book on Soviet Law interprets the freedoms of speech, press and assembly as "guaranteed" by the Soviet Constitution.

The AAA says in effect that the First and Fourteenth Amendments confer limited rights only and "When the speech, writing or other actions of a member of a faculty *exceed lawful limits,* he is subject to the same penalties as other persons." The italics are ours. The idea that there are "lawful limits" on speech or writing other than those which punish libel or actual incitment to crime was rejected by the Framers of the Constitution.

Disloyal "Founding Father"

We suggest that the FBI (if it has not already done so) rush agents up to Princeton where that University's chapter of the American Association of University Professors have just adopted a quite different statement on academic freedom, basing themselves on "the convictions of one of our Founding Fathers who declared: 'The opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction' and 'to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy.' "

We decline to snitch on a Founding Father and leave the source of those quotations unidentified. If J——— M——— should be marked down as disloyal and unfit for government employment, the fault will not be ours.

Subversive Senator

We wonder, however, after reading Hoover's testimony criticizing those persons who defend the right of Communists to teach, whether there is now a loyalty file on a certain Senator from Ohio.

Come To Think of It

From an extension of remarks by the Hon. B. W. (Pat) Kennedy of New York in the House of Representatives on Eddie Cantor's Campaign for Red Cross Bloodbank:

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker . . . Last evening on this television program which runs from coast to coast he (Eddie Cantor) dedicated a song entitled 'My Sweetheart Mamie' . . . to the wife of the President of the United States. . . . This was done in typical Cantor fashion, and once more demonstrated to the world the close bonds of harmony which exist between the American people, their Chief Executive and his wife.

This is probably the only country in the world where . . . freethinking and independent-acting citizens may refer to the First Lady of the land by her first name. . . .

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JENNINGS PERRY'S PAGE

The Way to Succeed This Time at Panmunjom

It has been a full year and seven months since I hopefully pointed out to Admiral Joy and his truce-seeking opposites at Panmunjom that if they would arrange for the boundaries of the neutral zone to be pushed out one mile every day they failed to agree on a truce, they would get a peace whether or not they ever got an agreement.

Unfortunately no such arrangement was made, even though, it will be recalled, fixing the boundaries of the neutral zone was one of the matters left entirely to the commanders in the field. Perhaps the idea seemed too simple or the device too mechanical. It would have served to backstop the truce talks, nevertheless, and it is hard to see how indeed it would not have got a peace.

The armies long ago would have been out of contact with each other, and by now would be some 1200 miles apart, ours in Japan or Okinawa and the Chinese back in China. Our bombers would have nothing to bomb. In the slowly expanding neutral zone the Koreans could have planted and harvested two crops, and could have held at least the first of the national elections in which their choice of government must in the end be made.

At the old tent at Panmunjom meanwhile, there need not have been more progress in the negotiation of a truce than there has been in the presence of the stalemated battle—though in all probability there would have been more: it would have been difficult not to recognize the armistice-in-fact. In Washington the supporters of Gen. MacArthur and of Gen. Van Fleet could have maintained as endlessly and as romantically what their heroes might have done, given the men, the guns—and the word, to work a conclusive victory over the hated foe. Sen. Smith as keenly could have pressed her inquiry into who had (or had not) the ammunition. . . .

The thing is that by a fair and honorable contrivance the actual battle could have been disjoined; the young men who have been required to kill each other would have been spared the necessity of killing each other; the people and the land of Korea could have been by degrees relieved of the disaster of war. By this spring, the slopes of Old Baldy could have been green and quiet again.

The granny-knot Admiral Joy could not untangle now has passed to Admiral Daniel; there is a new and more promising atmosphere at Panmunjom. The ceasefire all have hoped for may be decided in the tent before another summer comes. Not many more of the young men may have to be obliterated for the sake of taking or holding an unheard of height to keep the war alive.

I suggest again that the peace is more important than the parley; and that the world, in particular the world in the trenches, ought to have a firmer earnest of it than the talks going at the table. I suggest again that the negotiators met in the tent with whatever good will can put the hopes of the world *in no better train than by starting a regular, measured expansion of the Panmunjom sanctuary which will continue* to inch back the actual battlefield every day that a formal armistice is delayed.

We tell ourselves that it is inconceivable that men lack the intelligence to terminate an armed strife without some sort of "arbitrament at arms," but the proof waits on the event. And it is stupid during the waiting not to abate the bloodshed if we know how. Certainly in Korea, where we have crucially committed ourselves to turn from a resort to arms to a resort to sense, it would be stupid not to try to taper off the battle, and there is no sure way to do this save by separating the combatants.

It could be of course that the Panmunjom talks once more will end in deadlock, and we may consider what then will happen to the war if in the meantime we shall have put all of Korea, piece by piece, out of bounds for battle? Will the war simply dry up and cease for lack of contact between the forces? The answer undoubtedly is that it would; and furthermore that, if no happier answer can be found through negotiation, mutual accommodation and agreement, the resulting "peace" would still be to be cherished.

The worst that could happen to the world in that case would be the discovery that the prolongation of a war in which both sides had been put out of each other's reach would be unbearably silly. And that knowledge could lead — who knows?—to the healthy realization that in our times war is silly however it is permitted to come.

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